

Senate Bill Parallels Congressional Hispanic Caucus Bill In House

September 30, 2010

Media Contact: Douglas Rivlin (202) 225-8203

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Washington, DC) – *As promised, Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) introduced his comprehensive immigration reform bill in the Senate on Wednesday. Sen. Menendez was joined by Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT) as an original co-sponsor. The following is a statement by Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL), the Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus' Task Force on Immigration and the principal author of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity Act (CIR-ASAP, H.R. 4321), which has 103 co-sponsors in the House and has been endorsed by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.*

The Senator and the rest of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus have been very clear: we need comprehensive immigration reform to reestablish law and order and reestablish sanity in our immigration system. Senator Menendez promised to lead us forward on the issue in the Senate and he has kept his promise.

We need to get undocumented immigrants into the system because we do not have the capacity or the will to drive more than 10 million men, women, and children from our country

and it is economic suicide and a moral crisis to continue trying to do so. We need legal ways for people to come to the U.S. for legitimate purposes that gives us control over the process and puts criminal smugglers out of business. We must make businesses follow the law and construct a visa system that provides an alternative to the illegal marketplace. And we need to target our resources on removing and keeping out those individuals who aim to do us harm or who do not play by the rules, but we need an efficient, fair process for those who -- like every generation of immigrants to these shores -- aim to build us up. We cannot achieve meaningful border security until we pass comprehensive immigration reform, so I applaud Sen. Menendez for moving us down the road towards a solution.

Of course, the politics of immigration reform are ugly and will remain so as long as politicians see an advantage in stoking fears and dividing the American people on the issue. The fact is that we have been following the deportation-only side of this debate for decades and it has led to less law and less order and we need a new and more sensible approach. By modernizing our system and making legality and personal responsibility paramount, we can take control and make immigration work for 21st Century America the way it worked America in the 20th Century and before.

The American people know that immigration is a uniquely American phenomenon that defines who we are as a nation. And Americans demand that it work for us on our terms. That is what comprehensive immigration reform will do. We have a plan that combines enforcement with legal channels; we have a plan that combines AGJOBS, with the DREAM Act, and provisions for families and employers and that demands that people already here get legal. And the sooner we make it clear that we have a sound plan that can pass and that will solve the problems we face, the sooner we can blow by the obstructionists who just want to fan the flames of an anxious electorate.

In Washington, passing anything is next to impossible and passing serious, thoughtful legislation to solve a tough public policy issue is harder than that. But it starts with a first step. This bill and the bill we crafted in the House are steps towards resolving the immigration issue in a rational way. When stacked up against the fantasy of mass deportation or mass exodus for tens of millions of immigrants and their families, the common sense approach -- the comprehensive approach of making people play by the rules -- is the only path forward.

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